

Rockville City Police Department

General Crime Prevention Tips

Banking and ATM's

Automatic teller machines (ATMs) have revolutionized the personal banking industry, providing unprecedented ease and convenience. However, they have also created new opportunities for thieves and robbers. Here are tips to keep you and your money secure while conducting all types of banking transactions.

Never walk away from the teller's window or an ATM with cash still in hand. If you are going to count your money, do so at the window or the ATM. Take the time to put your money in your wallet and put your wallet in an inside pocket or pouch before leaving.

Be aware of your surroundings while making transactions at an ATM. If you feel uneasy, end the transaction as quickly as possible and leave the area.

- Look around before entering a secured ATM center. Never hold the door open for someone else entering an ATM location. You could be letting in a possible offender.
- If someone follows you into an ATM center and you feel uncomfortable, leave right away.
- Avoid using an ATM at night.
- Fill out deposit slips before beginning your transaction (not in plain view). Complete your transaction quickly.
- Use your body as a shield when making a transaction at the bank teller or the ATM.
- Keep your Personal Identification Number (PIN) private. Never affix it to your card or keep a copy in the same wallet as your card.
- Take all receipts with you. You don't want to let a potential criminal know how much money you have withdrawn or how much you have in the bank.
- Avoid large cash withdrawals.
- When making an ATM transaction from your car, be aware of your surroundings. Keep your eyes and ears open, and keep car doors locked.

Beware of Scams

The Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) national office continues to hear reports of organizations conducting telephone solicitations on behalf of C.O.P.S. Concerns of Police Survivors does not conduct telephone solicitations and C.O.P.S. chapters are prohibited from conducting telephone solicitations as well.

C.O.P.S. is asking anyone who receives such a call to please secure the name, address and phone number of the organization and forward it to the C.O.P.S. national office. Also, if you receive any mail solicitations from organizations using the C.O.P.S. acronym please forward that mail to the national office. C.O.P.S. will follow-up on your behalf.

Source: North Carolina Criminal Information Exchange, March-April 2002

Cellular Phone Safety

- Install and use the hands-free or speakerphone option to allow you to keep your hands on the steering wheel and your eyes on the road.
- Make sure your phone is mounted where you can easily reach it while driving.
- Familiarize yourself with all of the operations of your cellular phone and learn to use it without looking.
- Keep your attention on the road by programming frequently called numbers into the phone's memory to minimize dialing.
- Dial sensibly. Wait for a stoplight or pull off the road to dial — or ask your passenger to dial for you.
- Don't use your cellular phone in distracting traffic situations. Pull off the road to make a call.
- Be careful about where you stop to make calls. Parked callers may become victims of phone theft.
- When calling 911 to report an emergency, be prepared to provide the closest major cross streets or off-ramps, mile markers, and know your cellular phone number.
- Use your Voice Mail to take calls or leave yourself messages. Don't take notes while driving.
- Disconnect your cellular phone when using jumper cables — the power surge could burn out your phone.

Common Sense Tips to Spot a Con

It is not always easy to spot a con artist. They are extremely persuasive and aggressive. One easy rule to remember: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

- Never give a caller your credit card, phone card, social security number or bank account number.
- Beware of 900 numbers. If you call a 900 number to claim a "prize" you will pay for the phone call.
- Take your time and shop around. Get a second opinion.
- You have the right, the ability, and the power to say NO!
- Look closely at offers that come in the mail. Con artists often use official-looking forms and language.
- Beware of cheap home repair work that would otherwise be expensive. Never accept offers from drive-up workers who "just happen" to be in the neighborhood.
- Report con games to the police. Don't be embarrassed. Some very astute people have been taken by cons. Reporting is vital.

Suspicious Activity

Did you know that 9 out of every 10 arrests are made because of a neighborhood tip? The following list of suspicious activities highlights only a few of the many suspicious acts criminals do every day. You will not be in trouble if you call the police about something suspicious. At the very least make your neighbors aware of the situation so they can watch too.

- Anyone looking in a car or home.
- Anyone forcibly entering a car or home.
- Someone running from a home or business.
- Someone carrying a weapon.
- Someone screaming.
- An unknown adult talking to children, offering them candy or gifts or asking them for help.
- Someone who does not belong in the area.
- A person walking in the neighborhood with items which could be stolen.
- Anyone ringing your doorbell or knocking on your door without an unreasonable explanation.
- Persons loitering around a schoolyard or park.
- Strange vehicles parked in your area for several hours.
- A clean automobile with dirty or damaged tags.
- Groups of people loitering or walking through your neighborhood.

Tips for Safer Seniors

- Be alert when going out. Go with friends or family, not alone.
- Carry your purse close to your body. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.
- Don't carry credit cards you don't need or large amounts of cash.
- Use direct deposit for checks.
- Install good locks on doors and windows and USE THEM.
- Don't hide keys outside. Instead, give a neighbor or friend an extra set.
- Ask for photo identification from service or delivery people before letting them in.
- Be sure your house number is large and well lighted so police and other emergency personnel can find your home quickly.
- Be aware of cons. Don't fall for anything that sounds 'too good to be true'.
- Never give your credit card, social security or bank account number to anyone over the phone. It is illegal for telemarketers to ask for these to verify a prize or gift.
- Report any crime or suspicious activities to the police.
- Join a Neighborhood Watch program.

Tips for When You're Out

Here are 18 ways to protect yourself while you are out:

- Try to arrange to have a companion with you when out walking.
- Plan your route. Use well-lit streets.
- Walk on the curbside away from buildings where an assailant could conceal himself.
- Don't stray away from the well-traveled path or take short cuts through alleys.
- Don't have that "one drink too many". Street criminals look for victims whose defenses may be impaired by alcohol.
- If you think you're being followed by someone on foot, change directions or head for a store or a group of people.
- If you are on foot and think you are being followed by someone in a car, change directions.
- If a driver stops to ask for directions, don't get too close to the car and risk being pulled in.
- When shopping, don't carry or flash large sums of cash.
- Women should carry purses close in to their bodies, with a hand on a clasp, if possible. Purses should not be dangled.
- Consider carrying a shoulder bag. It's harder for a purse snatcher to grab.
- When carrying armfuls of packages, women should tuck purses in between the packages and the body.
- Carry your keys in your pocket, so if your purse is taken, you won't lose them.
- Never leave purses on store counters or sitting on the floor in a restroom.
- Be alert for suspicious looking persons when you enter a public restroom.
- Men should carry their wallet in an inside jacket pocket or a front pocket.
- Beware of the person who crowds you in an elevator or group of people. He may be a pickpocket.
- Don't hitchhike. You have no way of knowing who is going to pick you up or what their intentions are.